[161 cont.]

177 439 294 Since cultivation and the treatment of hemp is difficult and complicated, the "Méo" are adopting little by little the use of cotton materials which they buy in the markets from natives of the other groups. Likewise the women purchase from the Chinese merchants needles, multicolored thread and silk, glass decorations, and so on, used in their embroidery.

531 294 868 The art of embroidery, of which some of our photographs give us an idea, is developed to a degree of perfection one does not expect to find among these tribes, who in other respects are rather primitive. The young girls are trained from an early age in this delicate art, and they themselves prepare all the very richly decorated pieces of their wedding costumes.

273 The "Méo" make alcohol from rice or maize, either by fermentation or by distillation. For the latter process, they make use of the stills already described.

317 439 The "Méo" of the sector of Thanthuy carry on an important commerce in coffin wood, a fossilized wood which has become proof against rotting and is much sought after by the Chinese for making coffins.

326 [411] The "Méo" armorers manufacture guns with very long barrels, of a model analogous to those of the "Man." The "Méo" know how to make powder. They carry it in a small powder flask of horn, suspended from the neck by a cord on which colored glass beads are strung. They are adroit [162] and fearless huntsmen. They do not 224 fear to confront panthers and bears with their rudimentary weapons. Those of them who are enrolled in the corps of partisans charged with guarding the frontier, and who, as a result, are armed with a model 1874 rifle, demonstrate remarkable skill in hunting wild beasts, firing only when certain of making a kill in order to economize their precious ammunition. (We have had to pay the "Méo" partisans relatively large sums for the destruction of harmful animals, because of the bounty of 10 piasters for each panther killed.)

226 262 The "Méo" are not fishermen, fish being relatively rare in the upper reaches of the mountain torrents. Nevertheless, they eat fish (fresh or dried) when they have the opportunity.

262 /374 cont./
252 Bamboo sprouts, which are cut up and cooked in water, are very popular. Furthermore, both in the rice fields and in [351] the small house-gardens, the Meau plant bananas and pomelos, [245] which are only eaten raw, whereas bananas are also roasted or fried in fat. In the gardens or in the poppy fields three varieties 263 of pepper are cultivated, which, like the hot chilies and a whole series of wild fruits, likewise dried and pulverized, are used as spices.

251 The Meau also preserve meat, and, to be sure, either by [317] /375/ salting it or they let it dry in the sun or smoke it over the [135] fire. Although salt springs occur naturally in northern Thailand [171] and the Meau can also observe how the neighboring Lao obtain [439] salt at such places, the salt needed is purchased from the traders (see the chapter, "Trade") and not obtained locally.

252 Sugar cane is either eaten raw or sugar is made from it, [262] which plays an important role among the Meau. For this the sugar cane is peeled and cut into small pieces and pounded in the rice mortar. The mass is then cooked for hours in large pans until it is brown and begins to harden.

The Meau also know how to prepare yeast. For this purpose the granular seeds of a leafy plant are pulverized and kneaded to a dough with water. Some of the residue from the last alcohol distillation is added, and everything is left to ferment together for three or four days. Now the mass is dried [251] in the sun or over the fire and finally poured into bamboo flasks where it is said to keep, ready for use, up to two years.

From all these ingredients, and, I might say, basic foods, the Meau know how to make many composite dishes, a number of which can be called national dishes.

[262] For festive days cakes (tsuă) are made, three kinds of which are known.

1. Glutinous rice is ground to a fine flour. Now one takes nine parts of this flour and mixes it with one part of cooked and ground tubers. With the addition of water and a little sugar, the dough is kneaded, out of which small flat loaves about 12 centimeters in diameter are made. These are wrapped in green leaves and steamed.